United Nations A/ES-10/413–S/2008/144

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
4 March 2008

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 1 March 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

It is with deepest regret that I inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, continues its deadly rampage in the Gaza Strip and that the Palestinian death toll continues to rise, with many innocent children and women among the dead and wounded.

What we are witnessing now is the horrific materialization of the repeated threats made by several Israeli officials, who have threatened to launch large-scale military attacks against the Palestinian people under their occupation in the Gaza Strip. In this regard, it must be brought to your attention that the Deputy Defense Minister of Israel, Matan Vilnai, has threatened to inflict a "holocaust" among the Palestinian people in Gaza. Such threats, combined with the actual killing of civilians and destruction being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, must be viewed with the utmost seriousness, must be vehemently condemned and require immediate action by the international community, including the Security Council.

Civilians under foreign occupation are entitled to protection — of their person and of their dignity — under international humanitarian law. Moreover, it must be clearly and firmly reiterated that international humanitarian law absolutely prohibits reprisals against a civilian population. Real and immediate measures must be taken to avert the killing of even more innocent souls and avert the uncontrollable spiral of the situation to irreversible depths, wherein the vicious, depraved and deadly cycle of violence will consume everything in its path and extinguish all hopes.

In this regard, I must draw your attention to the fact that, today, Saturday, 1 March 2008, the Palestinian people in the northern Gaza Strip town of Jabaliya were awoken from their sleep by the terror of another Israeli military onslaught — a planned and deliberate attack against a heavily populated civilian area. The Israeli military attacks since the pre-dawn hours, mainly by missile strikes from warplanes and also by artillery attacks from ground forces, have thus far resulted in the killing of at least 50 Palestinians, bringing to 84 the total number of Palestinians killed

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since Wednesday. Initial reports indicate that at least five children, including a 2-day-old infant and three women, are among the dead, several of them members of the same family. This rising death toll, and particularly the deplorable killing of children, over 19 in the past few weeks, as well as women, elderly people, and other innocents, should be gravely alarming and disturbing to any with a conscience.

Further, today in the Gaza Strip, it is being reported that more than 150 Palestinians have been wounded by the Israeli occupying forces in this latest round of attacks. The hospitals in Gaza, which are already facing critical shortages of medical supplies and decaying equipment as a result of the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, are now exerting all efforts possible under such circumstances to treat those wounded in these attacks. Additionally, the Israeli occupying forces continue to target medical rescue teams and forbid ambulances to evacuate the wounded. Meanwhile, the rest of the population in the area, gripped by panic and fear and already suffering humanitarian hardship, is reported to be hiding in their homes, but even there they know they are not safe from the military strikes of the occupying Power.

Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for all of these grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Lack of accountability will only lead to the perpetration of even more war crimes with impunity, as evidenced by the tragic and violent events of today. Moreover, in this regard, it cannot be doubted that the further intensification of the cycle of violence is only deepening suffering, stoking anger and bitterness, heightening tensions and frustrations, fuelling extremism and drowning moderation.

The Palestinian leadership calls for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to address this dramatic deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At this time of crisis, we reiterate our call upon the international community to uphold international law in all circumstances and the Security Council to uphold its Charter responsibilities and to undertake immediate measures to address this grave situation being faced by the Palestinian people. Continued silence and paralysis will surely bring only more death and destruction.

The international community must condemn the killing of civilians by Israel, the occupying Power, which is causing only more suffering and loss for the Palestinian people and taking us further away from the vision of peace we have been striving so desperately to realize, to no avail, as all efforts have been constantly undermined by such actions. Therefore, we call on the international community to shoulder its legal and moral obligation and provide the defenceless Palestinian civilians with urgently needed and effective protection. Additionally, an immediate ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and tangible action are required to bring an end to the violence, the killing of civilians, the destruction and the obstruction of the provision of humanitarian assistance.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 309 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 28 February 2008 (A/ES-10/414-S/2008/149), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian

people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

In follow-up to the above-mentioned letters, it is my deep regret to inform you that, since our last letter to you, 53 more Palestinians, including at least 5 children, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, raising the total number of martyrs killed since September 2000 to 5,065. (As all the martyrs have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer